

**OUTCOME FINDINGS REGARDING IN-CUSTODY ADVERSE BEHAVIOR BETWEEN
THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITY TREATMENT AND NON-TREATMENT POPULATIONS AND
ITS IMPACT ON CUSTODY PERSONNEL QUALITY OF LIFE**

David A. Deitch, Ph.D., Igor Koutsenok, M.D., Pam McGrath, M.F.C.C., Warden John Ratelle, Susie Carleton, R.N.

University of California, San Diego, Department of Psychiatry, Addiction Technology Transfer Center

While there is data suggesting that inmates with drug problems may benefit significantly from in-prison therapeutic community treatment (Wexler et al., 1995) which also reduces the rate of recidivism, little is known regarding the other major “participant” in this multidimensional system - the professional correctional staff. Understandably most policy interest is biased towards the cost containment savings of reduced recidivism. However, there is often another unseen cost, that of personnel costs, both in dollars and human resource training investment. A highly stressful work environment increases personal costs. For example, the rate of stress-related sick leave in the California Department of Corrections is higher than in any other State Governmental department. There is research evidence suggesting that correctional staff in general custody settings have a higher number of absentee days than other peer professional groups worldwide (Long et al., 1986, Harenstam et al., 1988), a higher rate of divorce (Suls, Gaes & Philo, 1991, Gross et al., 1994, March et al., 1995) in addition to many other psychological and physical variables indicative of stressful work conditions.

In recent years, some countries have returned to a more humanistic model of criminal justice, with an emphasis on rehabilitation oriented programs. In the US, the opposite trend is occurring with longer sentences, mandated minimal sentences, and a general loss of personal in-custody privileges (personal hairstyle, use of weightlifting equipment, etc.). Regardless of this trend, anecdotal data suggest that those correctional officers who are assigned to work in

facilities with drug treatment units report less stress and greater job satisfaction. However, little has been done to compare the impact of traditional custody vs. special drug treatment environments on the personnel themselves. Further, it has been theorized that custody personnel, who work under stressful conditions, begin to behave more punitively toward the inmate population. The question is, does the work environment in a drug treatment unit result in custody personnel experiencing less stress? A positive answer to this question, if substantiated, could influence national policy, increase personnel retention and reduce costs associated with health and absenteeism.

Methodology

To study this question we set out to examine the incidence and severity of adverse behavior among inmates in treatment vs. inmates in non-treatment units, theorizing that less adverse behavior would result in less stress for custody staff assigned to such units vs. their counterparts in non-treatment sectors. Further, to clarify the stress factors, if found, we used a limited number of quality of life indicators. The following are findings from the pilot phase of this project, and already represent statistically significant outcomes.

We first made a retrospective analysis of documented disciplinary problems and general personal information in a large California prison, where drug treatment existed for over four years. This particular facility was chosen because it is comprised of four separate yards/facilities, one of which contains both treatment and non-treatment sections, and five administrative units. The program utilizes a traditional drug treatment therapeutic community model, and is operated by a private non-profit corporation, which supplies the counseling staff. They interact on a daily basis with the custody staff assigned to the program. The inmates in treatment are not completely

segregated from the general prison population. Their housing unit is almost totally filled with the treatment population, but the inmates have mixed job assignments and other mixed activities with the rest of the population. The same trend is true for staff. Some of the custody staff assigned to the treatment environment also work with so-called “non-treatment” inmates, moving from the general population to the treatment setting. The officer: inmate ratio in the institution is 1:7-8. A targeted period of time (January 1, 1997 – June 30, 1997) was randomly chosen.

We chose for the adverse behavior examinations fourteen indicators, such as Rules Violation Report, Assault on Staff Report, Physical Force Report, etc. In examining these we also monitored and analyzed direct (Assault to officers, having to break up fights) and indirect (simply writing of a bad card report) impact on custody quality of life. The indicators were chosen as a cluster from the entire data recording system on the basis of their ability to reflect accurately the issues of safety and well being of the custody staff.

Results

Analysis of the variables strongly suggests a clear and statistically significant tendency towards much less problematic inmate behavior in the treatment yard as compared with the general custody yards. Some of the statistically significant findings were:

1. The number of Classification A Reports (the worst possible category for inmate adverse behavior) were significantly fewer in the treatment yard than in the rest of the institution.
2. The number of Classification D Reports, reflecting physical violence by inmates, in the treatment yard were more than ten times fewer than in non-treatment yards.

3. The number of incident reports in the treatment yard were more than four times fewer than in general custody yards.
4. We found a remarkable reduction in occupational injuries in staff non-related to assault in the treatment yard as compared with the rest of the institution.

Translated into personal safety and professional comfort, these findings indicate a significantly less stressful work environment for correctional officers assigned to the treatment yard, and for the inmates in treatment as well.

While the focus of drug treatment in custody settings is a benefit for the inmate and taxpayers, these findings also demonstrate benefit for the custody staff as well. Traditional custody is primarily concerned with behavioral management. Perhaps the main contributor to a less stressful work environment is the fact that treatment, particularly the therapeutic community model, works to shape and modify behavior as a complement to behavioral management.

The pilot phase has given us important findings, and our next step is a study of a larger sample, utilizing more indicators and research instruments. Our Center is currently providing training to prison personnel in multiple locations to aid implementing treatment in custody, and we will most likely use this work as a resource for further research.

Results

Distribution of total 115s written between facilities

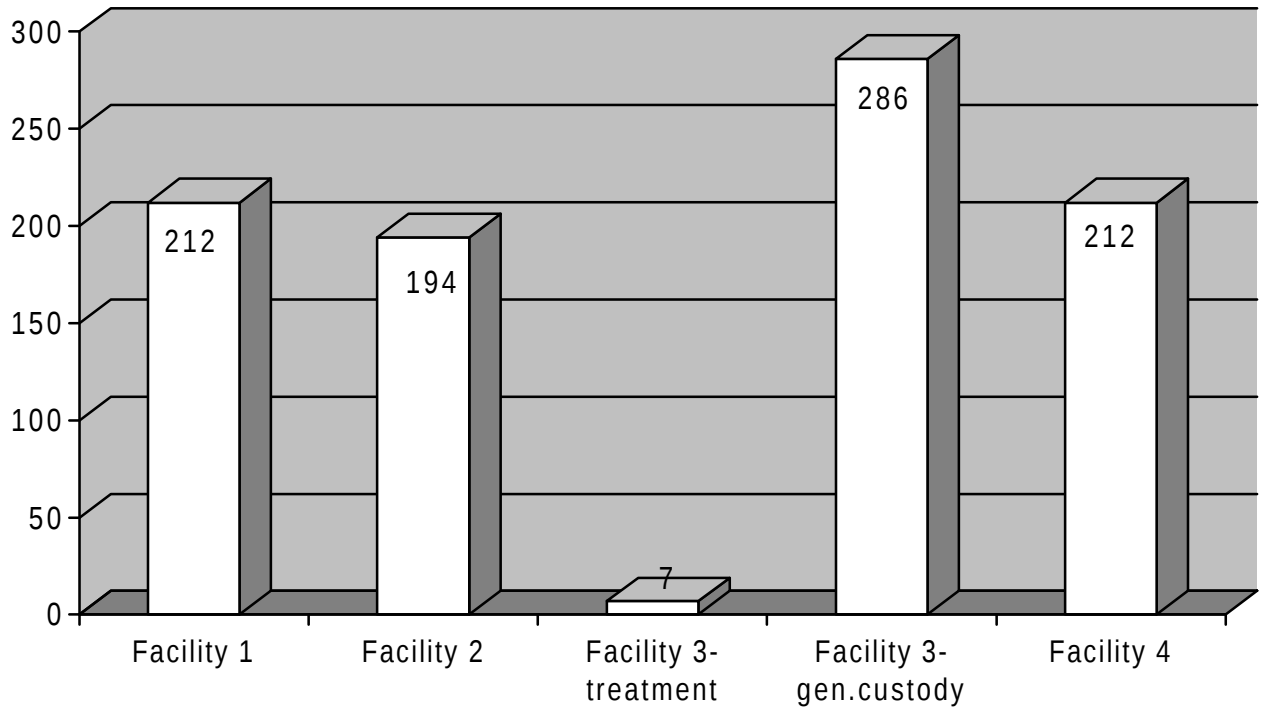


Figure 1

This chart shows that the general population of inmates, not in treatment in Facility 3 has the greatest number of 115's written in the entire institution, indicating a less safe and more problematic environment. However, the same indicator for the treatment group shows a dramatic positive difference with only 7 violations written vs. approximately 200 in the rest of the institution. Based on the average estimation for the institution, the number of 115s anticipated would be around 53 per 200 inmates.

Distribution of Administrative Classifications between facilities

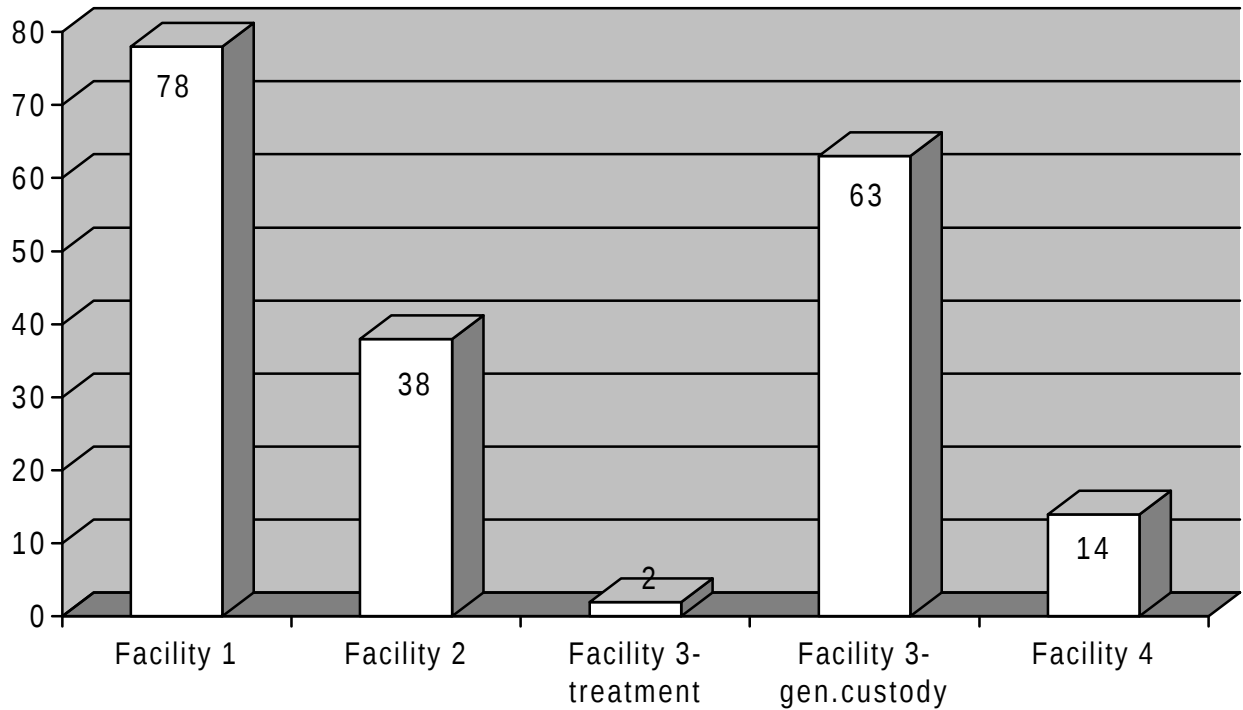


Figure 2

Although only two administrative classifications were written in the treatment environment, this indicator, measured proportionally, does not show a substantial difference within the institution.

Distribution of Serious Classifications A between facilities

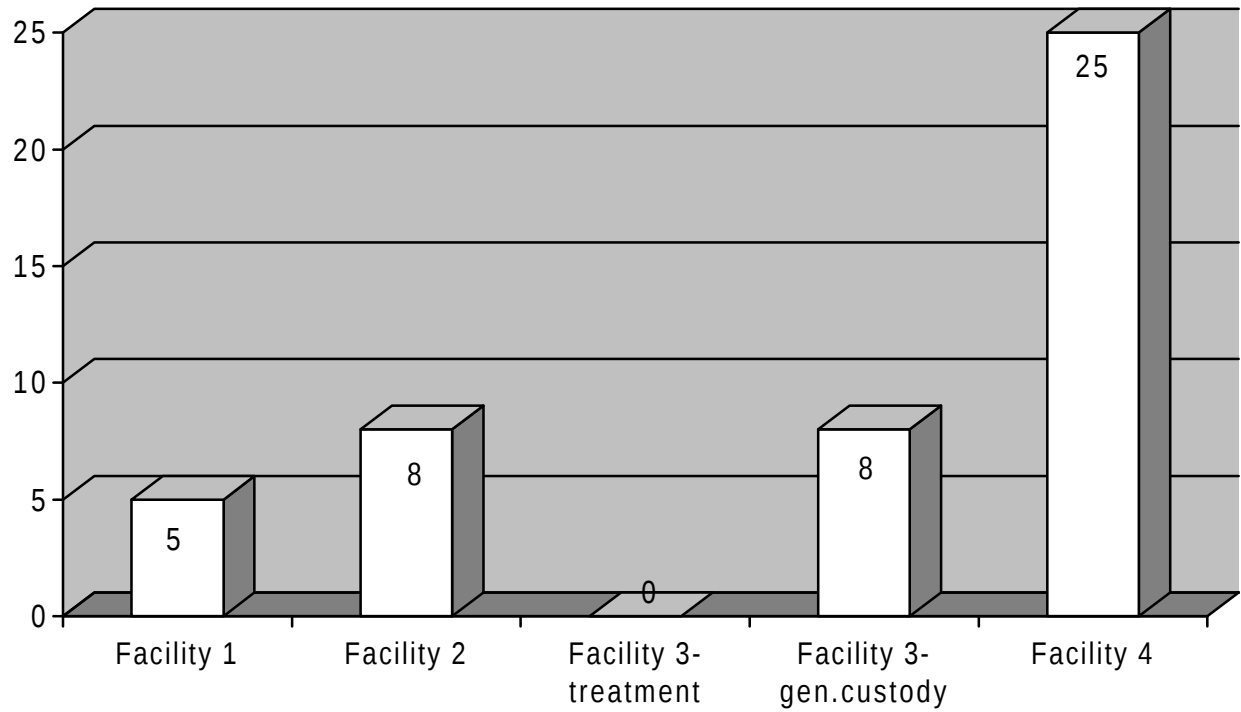


Figure 3

The average number of Serious Classifications A, which is the mildest category of rules violation, is two per 200 inmates. In the treatment setting the number was zero.

Distribution of Serious Classifications B between facilities

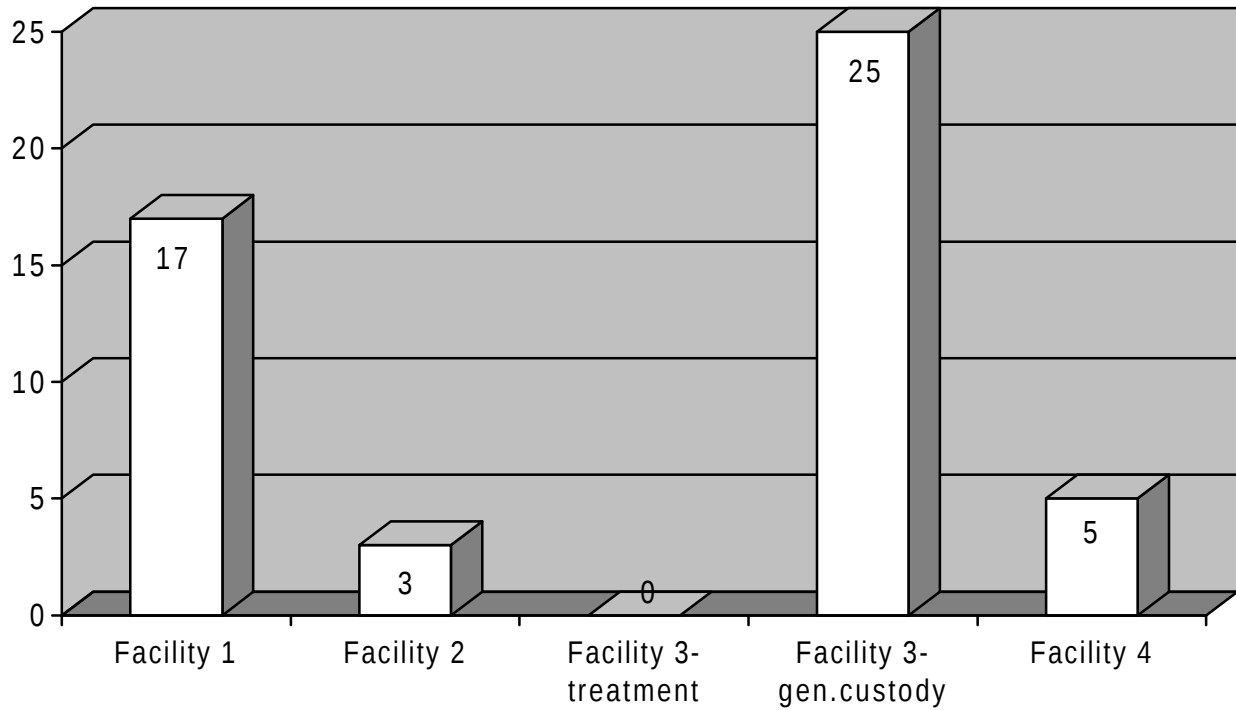


Figure 4

The number expected is two per 200 inmates, which is a reflection of the average trend for the institution on this indicator. However, the number for the treatment yard is zero.

Distribution of Serious Classifications C between facilities

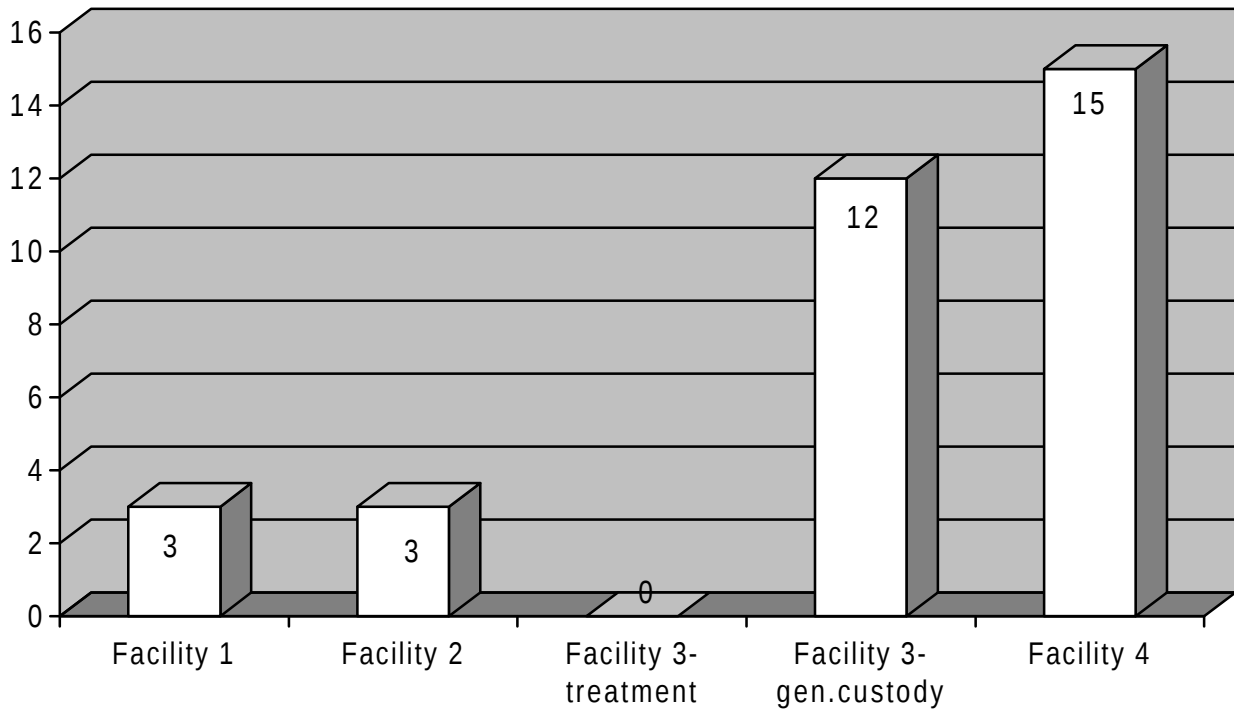


Figure 5

This indicator again shows a lower than expected number for the treatment unit than the average for the institution.

Distribution of Serious Classifications D between facilities

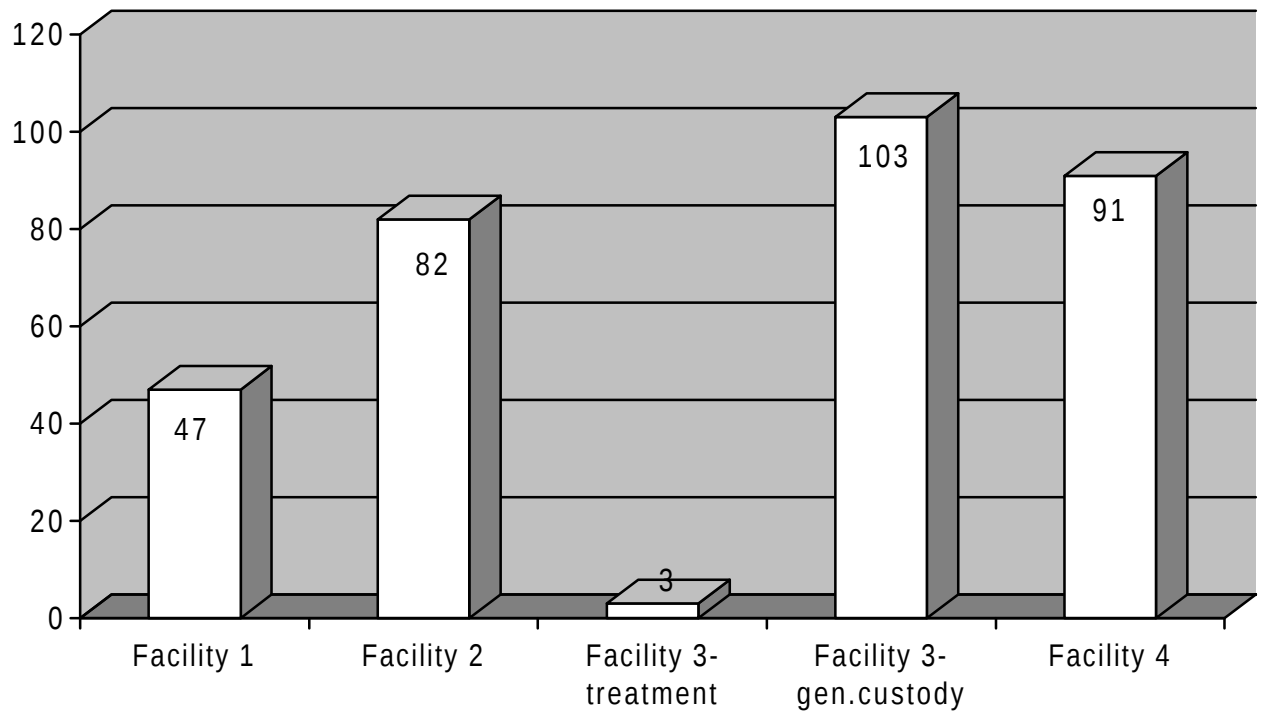


Figure 6

Serious Classification D refers to conduct problems, for example physical violence by inmates. The average number for the institution is 13.6 per 200 inmates. Remarkably, this indicator shows a significant trend toward much less prevalence of conduct problems in the treatment yard with only three citations written.

Distribution of Serious Classifications E between facilities

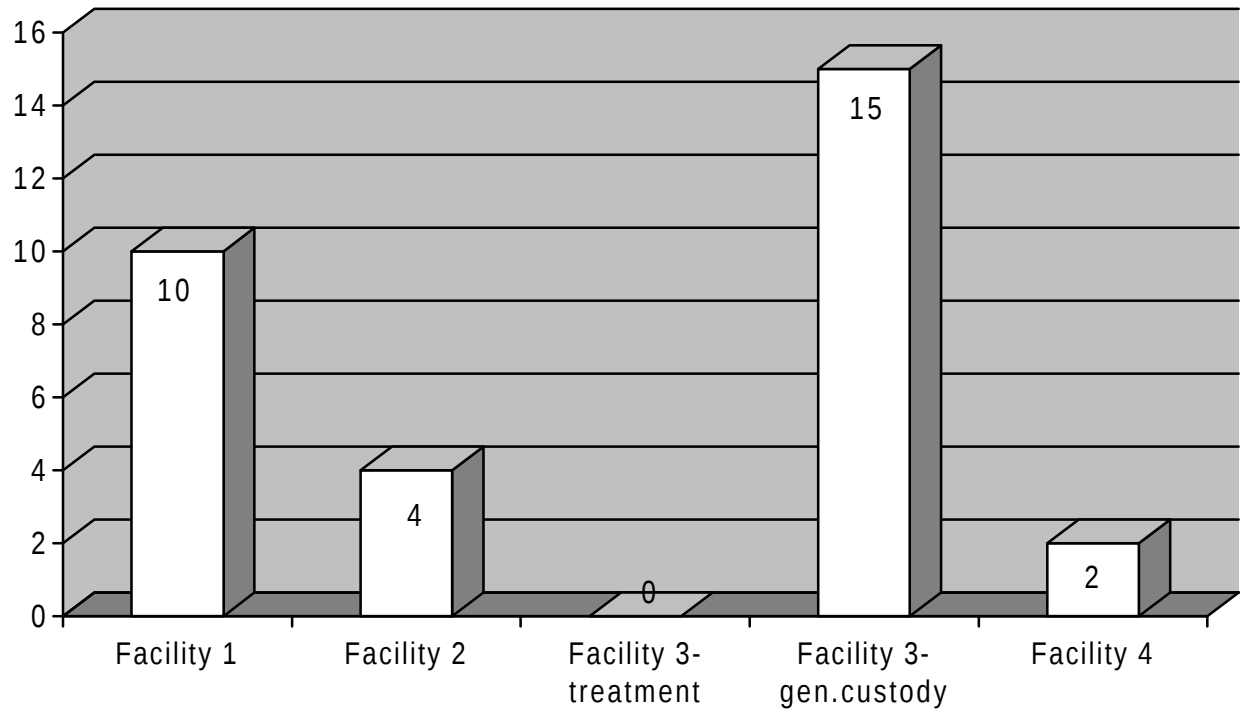


Figure 7

Following the previous pattern of estimation, the average number is 1.24 per 200 inmates. There were no citations written in the treatment yard.

Distribution of Serious Classifications F between facilities

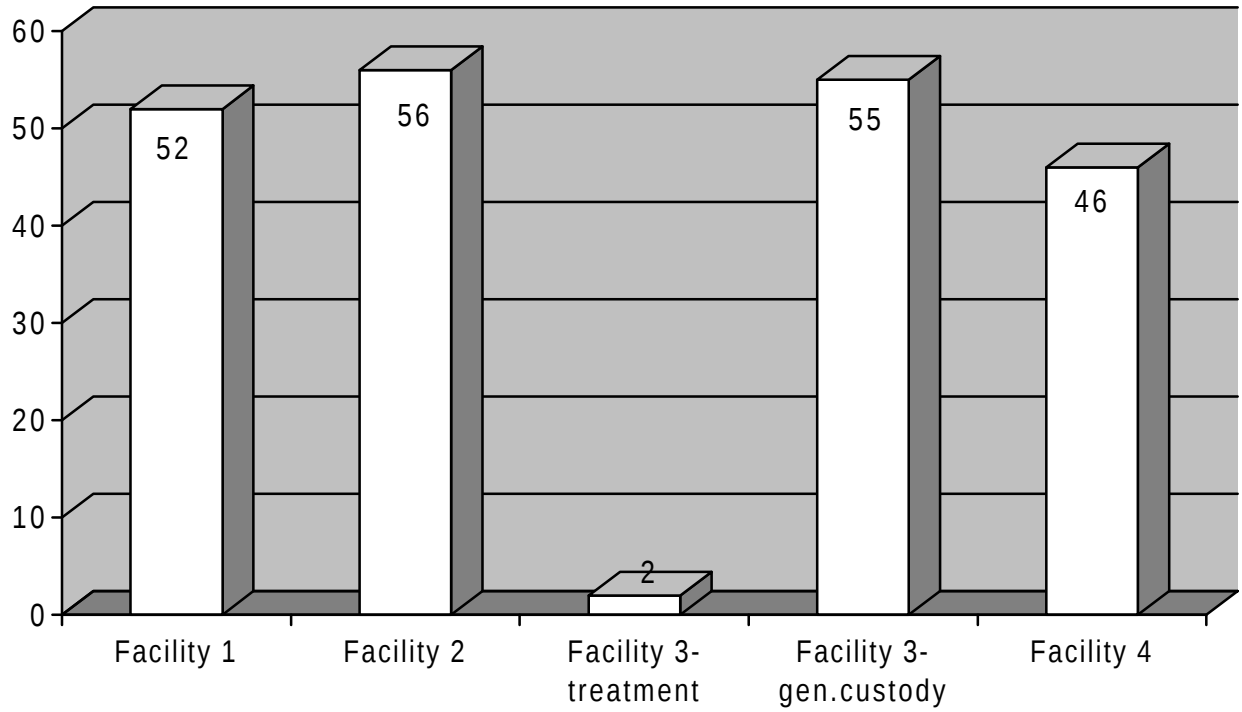


Figure 8

As in the case of Serious Classifications D, this indicator shows a significant reduction in the number citations written in the treatment yard (two vs. average 8.45 per 200 inmates).

Distribution of Incident Reports written between facilities

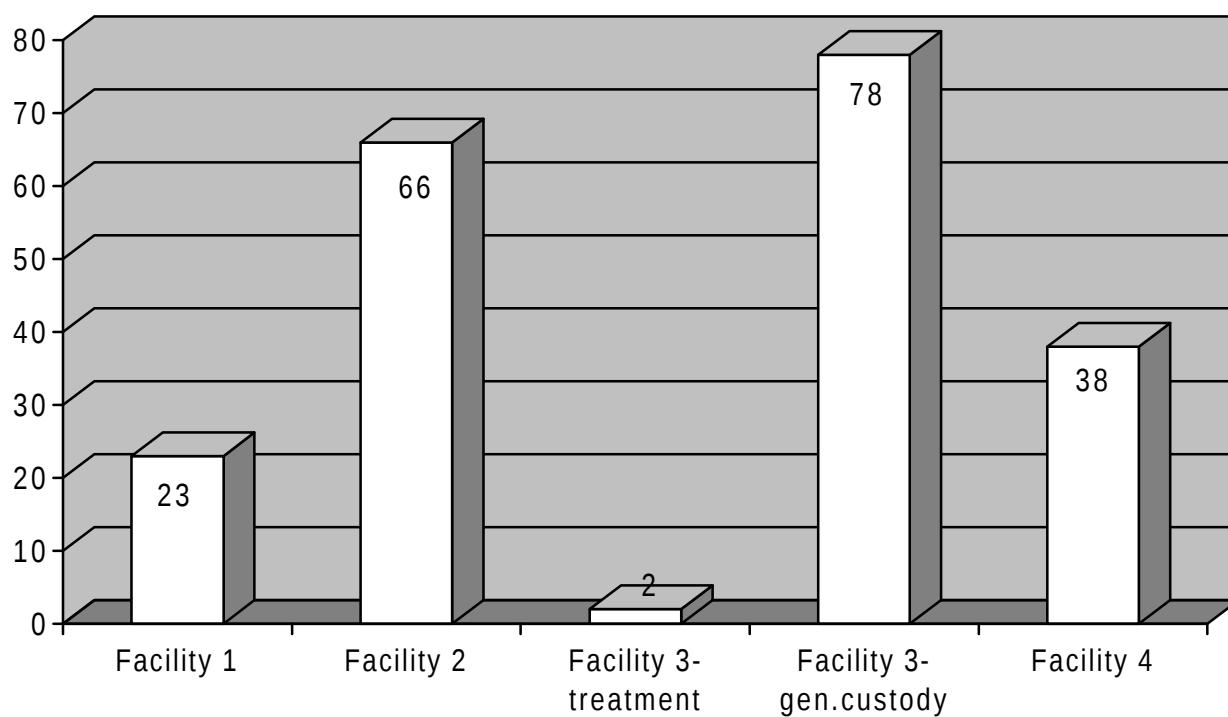


Figure 9

The same pattern can be observed in this indicator (two citations in the treatment yard vs. average 8.25 per 200 inmates for the institution)

Distribution of 3004 (Rights and Respect of others) Reports written
between facilities

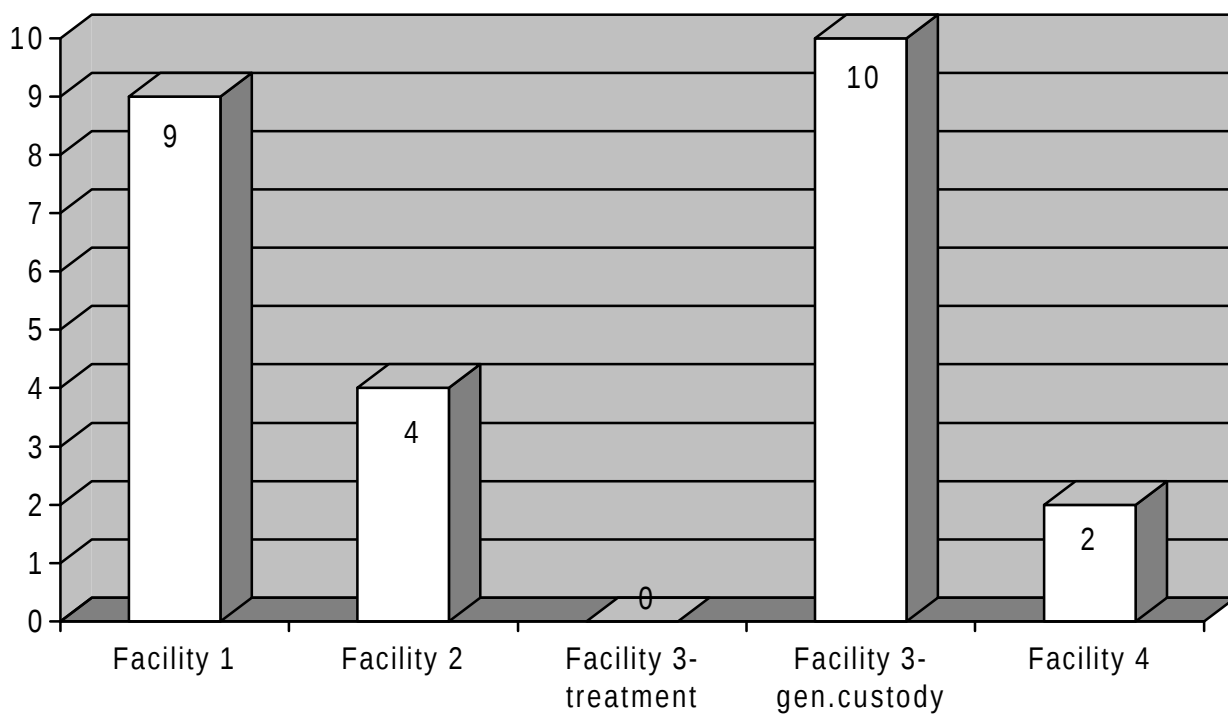


Figure 10

The average rate per 200 inmates is 1, while no citations were written in the treatment yard.

Distribution of 3005 (Conduct) Reports written between facilities

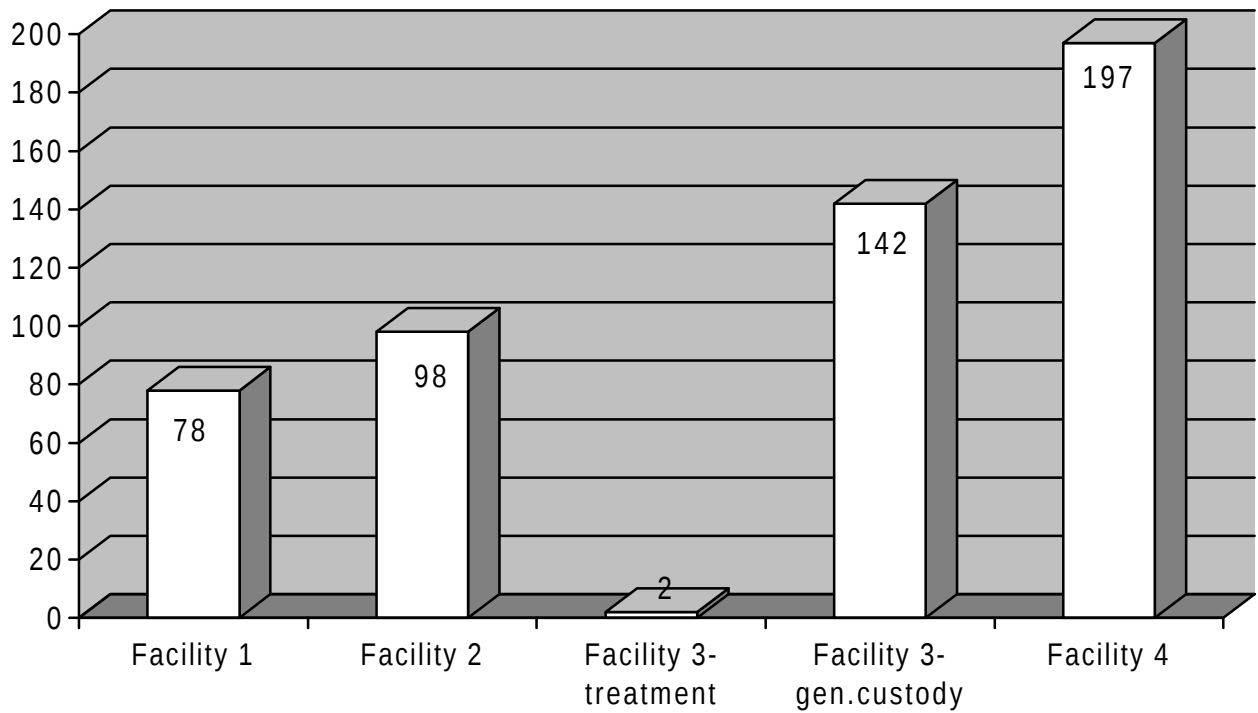


Figure 11

The analysis of this indicator is of great interest because it relates directly to safety issues. The average number per 200 individuals for the institution is 20.6. The number in the treatment yard was two, which is more than ten times less.

Distribution of 3006-a (Contraband) Reports written between facilities

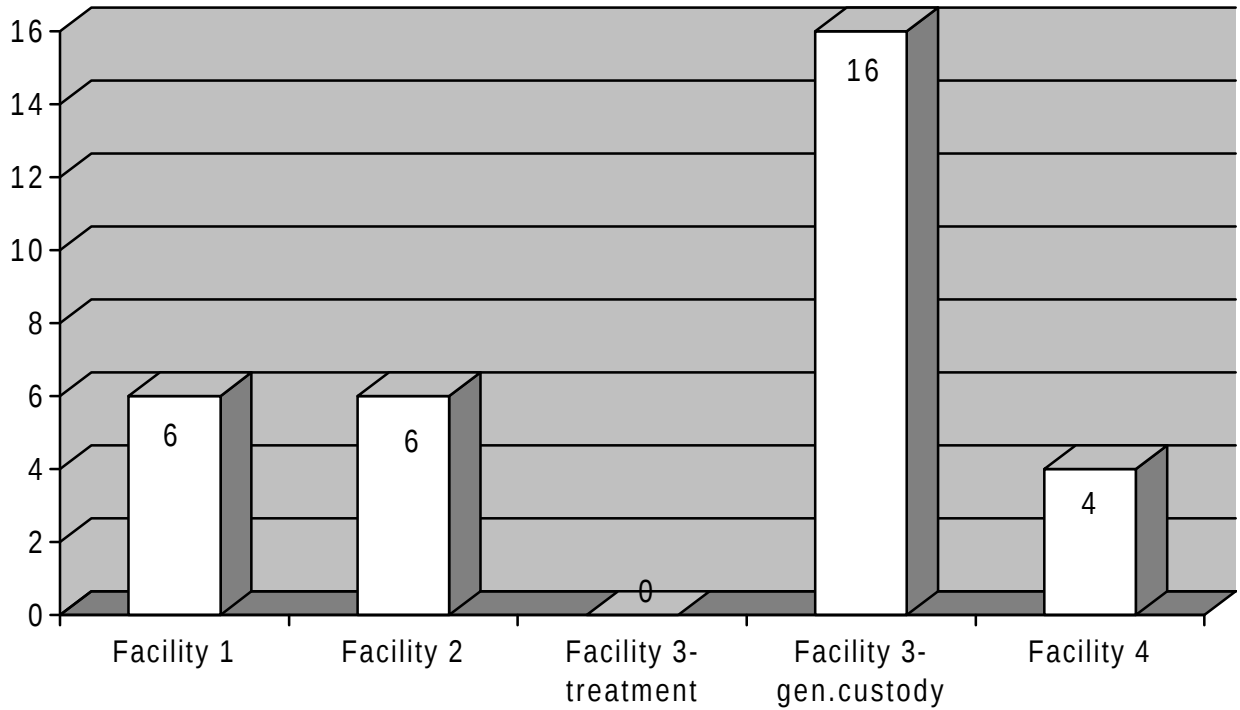


Figure 12

Again, the same favorable trend was found in the treatment yard (zero citations vs. 1.28 average per 200 individuals in the entire institution).

Distribution of occupational injuries in staff (non assaults) between facilities

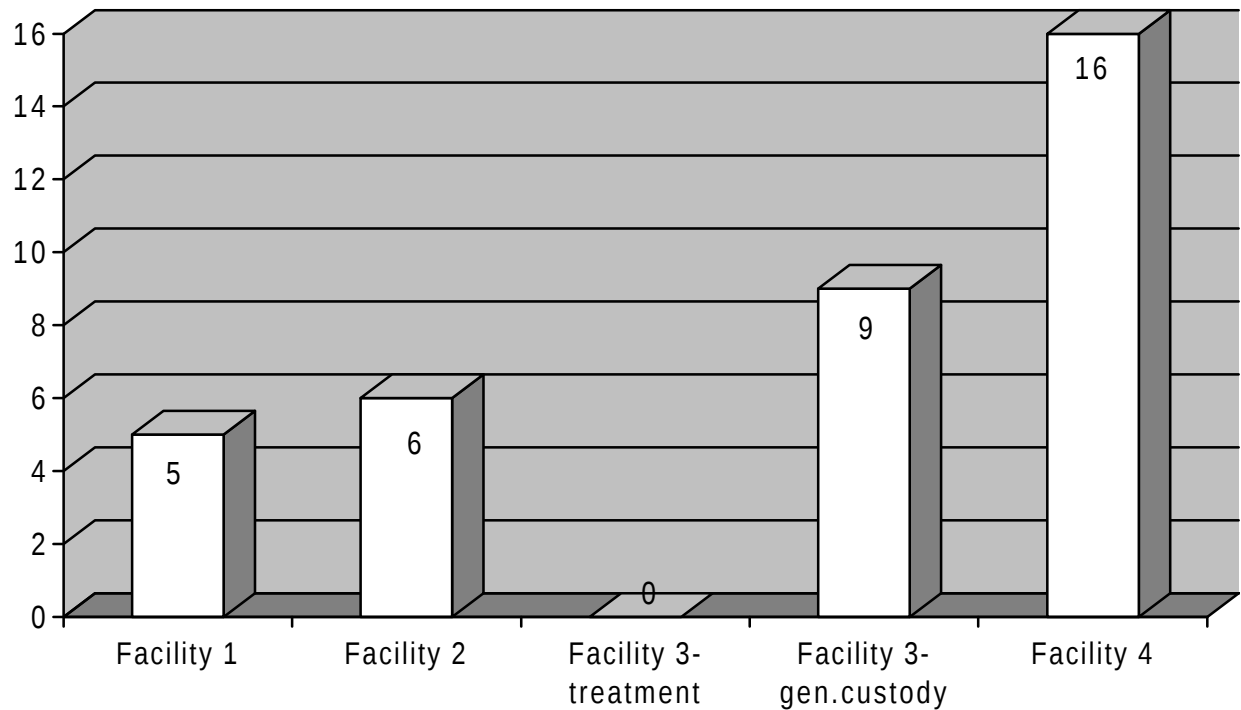


Figure 13

The chart shows that staff assigned to the treatment yard had much less number of occupational injuries not related to assault than staff working in the general custody yards.

Distribution of occupational injuries in staff (assaults) between facilities

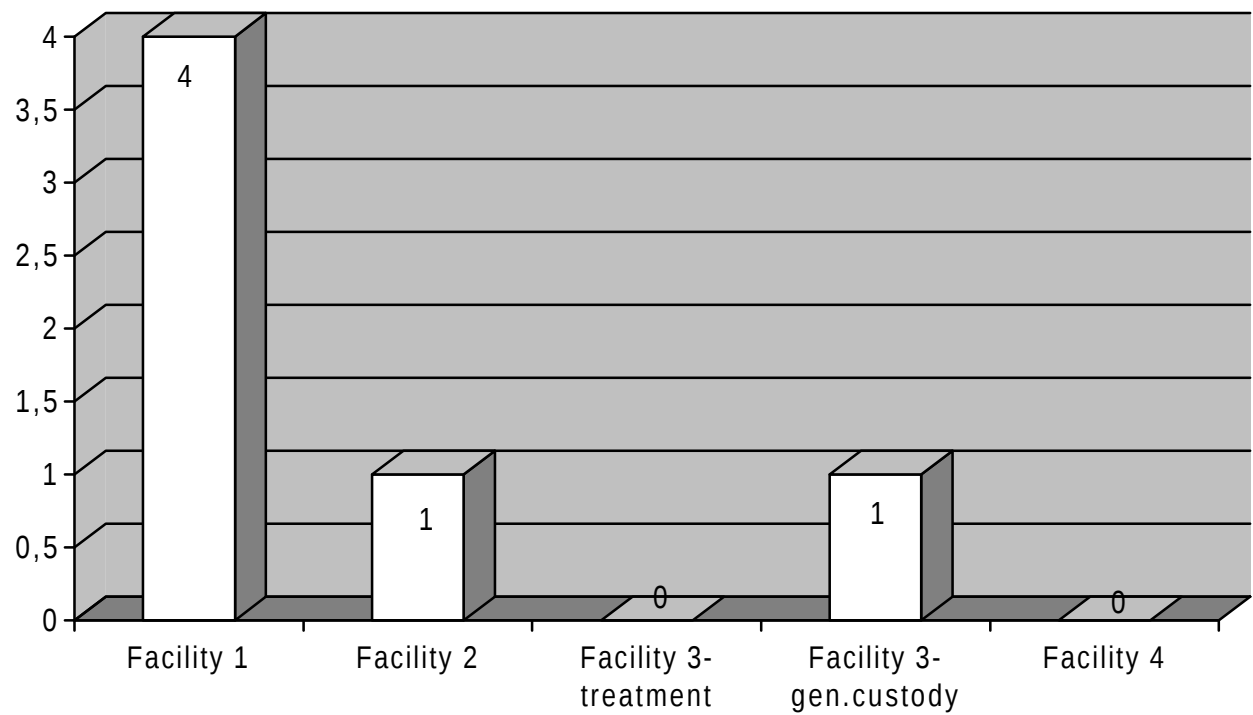


Figure 14

As in the case of occupational injuries not related to assault, the indicator of injuries in staff caused by inmates' assault is less in the treatment yard

References

- GROSS, G.R., LARSON, S.J., URBAN, G.D., ZUPAN, L.I. Gender differences in occupational stress among correctional officers. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 1994,18,2, 220-231.
- HARENSTAM, A., PALM, U.B., & THEORELL, T. Stress, health and the working environment in Swedish prison staff. *Work and Stress*, 1988, 4, 281-298.
- LONG, N.R., SHOUKSMITH, G., VOGES, K.E., & ROACHE, S. Stress in prison staff: An occupational study. *Criminology*, 1986, 24, 331-345.
- MARSH, A., DOBBS, J., MONK, J., & WHITE, A. Staff attitudes in the Prison Service: An enquiry carried out on behalf of the Home Office. Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, Social Survey Division, H.M.S.O., 1995.
- SULS, J, GAES, G., & PHILO, V. Stress and illness behavior in prison: Effects of life events, self-care attitudes, and race. *Journal of Prison & Jail Health*, 1991, v10 117-132.
- WEXLER, H., DELEON, G., THOMAS, G., KRESSEL, D., PETERS, J. (1995) The Amity Prison TC Evaluation: Reincarceration Outcomes. *Criminal Justice and Behavior* (In Press